

**Connecticut General Assembly  
Education Committee**

Good afternoon. My name is Tori Truscheit. I am the Research and Policy Manager at ConnCAN, the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now. I am testifying today in support of House Bill 6654, "An Act Establishing a Resident Teacher Certificate." As a Teach for America alum now working in education policy, I ask you to support this bill so that Teach for America teachers can continue to do great work in Connecticut schools.

As an English major at Yale, I took no college classes in education, but I was motivated by the scale of our nation's achievement gap to teach in urban schools. A mentor of mine at the time, Janna Wagner inspired me to apply to Teach for America.

I spent the next two years teaching 6<sup>th</sup> grade Literacy and Social Studies at Middle School 324 in Washington Heights, in Manhattan. After a summer of intense training, with student teaching and constant evaluation, I worked twelve-hour days for two years, arriving at school before dawn and planning lessons late into the night. I saw with my own eyes that smart, motivated teachers could make a difference: Teneesha, for example, lived in a domestic violence shelter but made two years of reading progress in her one year in sixth grade with me.

Research tells us this is not an uncommon story. There have been many studies about the effectiveness of TFA teachers; some of them are not rigorous, but others are not. One study that does rigorously measure TFA teachers' impact was published by the Urban Institute in 2008. It found that high school students taught by Teach for America teachers excelled compared to their peers. In fact, the study found that the effect on student achievement of having a TFA teacher was three times that of other new and even veteran teachers in the same school. In our neediest schools, TFA teachers are making a difference.

After my two years in New York, I returned to Connecticut and taught in a New Haven public school. Now, in my role as Research and Policy Manager, I've coordinated the Success Stories project, recognizing schools that are closing the gap in Connecticut. I've traveled all over the state, to fifteen urban schools that made great progress last year, creating video documentaries about the work that educators are doing to increase student achievement. I'm dedicating my career to closing the achievement gap, and Teach for America gave me that opportunity.

I would never have achieved the success I did in the classroom my first two years without the ongoing training that Teach for America provided. The establishment of an urban residency license makes good pedagogical sense: new teachers should have continued training through the first year of teaching instead of squeezing everything into the previous summer. In addition to support with classroom management and instruction in Saturday learning teams, I learned how to collect and use data in real time, with my own students. This kind of data training would have been impossible to fully grasp before I was in the classroom. A year-long urban residency license would allow Connecticut TFA teachers to continue this kind of essential training when they need it most: during their first year on the job.

When I taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade in Connecticut, I used to teach my students to end their persuasive essays by urging their audience to accept their proposal. So today, I urge you to pass House Bill 6654 and allow TFA teachers to keep working hard to close Connecticut's achievement gap.